# SPEAKING OUT

4/2012

## My time with the Gay Liberation Front

### Local historian recalls first Atlanta Pride march

*Guest column by* ***Dave Hayward***

I recall reading about the Stonewall riot in the New York Times in June 1969, and thinking, "Cool. We finally fought back. It's about time."

I was deeply closeted at the time, working as a cub reporter for my hometown newspaper in New Hampshire, where there was (and is) no gay life visible to any kind of queer eye.

In September, I was heading back to George Washington University in Washington, D.C., the essence of urbanity. Our joke was motorists would drive into the heart of the campus and holler out, "Where's George Washington University?!" There was nothing openly gay in all that concrete and clay, either.

The best I could do was furtively abscond to the gay bars downtown, until, praise God, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) began in D.C., in January 1970. GLF emerged full blown because of the Stonewall riot, the catalyst for all sorts of startups, including my favorite "Dykes and Tykes."

After graduation, in late 1971, I immigrated to Atlanta and immersed myself in the Gay Liberation Front here. It's quaint to me now that we assumed "gay" spoke for everyone. Even our unofficial transgender leader, Paul "Severin" Dolan, acquiesced to being "gay."

Not so much our lesbian sisters, who founded the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA) in 1972, often fostering "womyn only" space, including a house in Little Five Points that was off limits to men except on special occasions. I felt both honored and besmirched when I was allowed in.

Yet a married bisexual woman, Judy Lambert, was a major proponent of gay liberation as the co-chair with GLF founder Bill Smith. Meanwhile, Judy's macho husband, Phil, was exploring boys' nights out with our men's consciousness-raising cell groups. Primarily we rapped radical politics, and excoriated sexist objectification and looksist standards that made other gay men props. We wanted to passionately love our brothers, and not just get off with them.

In this witches brew we conjured the 1972 Atlanta Gay Pride, the first Pride march in the streets, because our "city too busy to hate" denied a permit to march for the first Pride in 1971. In '71 the 125 demonstrators "marched" on the sidewalks and stopped for every traffic light, according to activist Berl Boykin, one of the founders of GLF in 1969.

GLF stalwart Charlie St. John insured the '72 Pride had a bona fide permit, and when asked "How closely will the marchers march together?" he retorted "Very closely!" Soon after, St. John became Georgia's first openly gay anything, when Mayor Sam Massell appointed him to the Community Relations Commission in the fall of '72.

Leading the '72 March, Bill Smith made a major splash brandishing his white man's Afro and his dark rimmed glasses to look like the albino Stokely Carmichael of geeks. On TV newscasts across the metro area, he bellowed "What do we want?" "Gay rights!" "When do we want them?" "NOW!" The New York of the South cowered, but Bill kept his accountant's job at City Hall, though no one would speak to him the day after.

The two major gay bars of the day, the Sweet Gum Head and the Cove, disapproved of Gay Pride, too, and escorted us out when we leafleted their businesses. Gay Pride was just too radical for business interests. But ultimately, as we can see, we all came around.

*Dave Hayward is the co-founder with Berl Boykin of Touching Up Our Roots, Inc.: Georgia's LGBT History Project.*

*The first Atlanta Gay Pride March was organized by the Gay Liberation Front in 1972. (Courtesy Photo)*


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ATLANTA PRIDE

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ATLANTA PRIDE

# Rustin-Lorde Breakfast 'catalyst' for all social justice events of year

## New location for annual breakfast due to ongoing growth

By DYANA BAGBY

*"We need in every bay and community a group of angelic troublemakers."*
— Bayard Rustin

*"The erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings."*
— Audre Lorde

It's a homecoming for the 13th annual Bayard Rustin-Audre Lorde Breakfast, held every year in Atlanta as part of celebrating Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

This year's theme, "Justice, Freedom, Desire: A Homecoming," is about bringing attention to progressive issues, especially when it comes to black LGBT people.

"There's been ongoing attention around social justice and what that means for the LGBTQ community, especially for black queer folk ..." says Craig Washington, a co-founder of the popular breakfast that has grown to attract more than 200 people.

In the past, the Rustin-Lorde has focused its discussions to issues including immigration, poverty and healthcare.

But it was time to revisit why the breakfast was originally founded, Washington says — to recognize black LGBT people — and this year tackle the subject of some of the crushing discrimination faced by young LGBT people.

Homecoming has two layers, Washington explains. There's the convening and reuniting as part of ritual that is shared each year at the breakfast. And then there is the actual physical shelter and security a home provides.

"There is a critical impact for younger queer folk that due to homophobia or poverty or racism they have been disconnected from their house, particularly those who are trans or gender queer and who cannot find shelter," he says.

Safe spaces are needed for these young people, places like the Phillip Rush Center and the feminist Charis Books & More. And it's unfortunate some of these places, like Outwrite Bookstore, are no longer here to provide that safe space, Washington says.

At the breakfast, roundtable discussions that are so much part of the event, will occur and people will have the opportunity to express what all the themes mean to them, Washington says.

The decision to add "desire" to the mix was intentional and includes, but is not limited to, sexual desire, he says.

"Audre Lorde [talked] a lot about the power of the erotic. Not just the hedonistic pleasure, although that is part of it, but the deeper, profound and spiritual dimensions there are to desire," Washington says. "You can't be free if you can't be free to express your desire."

**Craig Washington** and **Darlene Hudson** are co-founders of the annual Rustin-Lorde Breakfast honoring gay civil rights icons Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde. (File photo)

**MORE INFO**

**Bayard Rustin-Audre Lorde Breakfast**
Monday, Jan. 20
Doors open at 9:30 a.m., breakfast served at 10 a.m.
All Saints Episcopal Church
634 West Peachtree St., Atlanta, GA 30308
www.facebook.com/RustinLordeBreakfast

**MLK March and Rally**
Steps off at 1:45 p.m.
Corner of Peachtree Street and Baker Street
and Xenora Clayton Way
www.mlkmarchaaar.org

### CREATING COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

Darlene Hudson, who co-founded the breakfast with Washington, said moving to a new location this year is due to the larger and larger crowds coming together at the past location, Saint Mark United Methodist Church. For the past few years, it's been standing room only at the Rustin-Lorde Breakfast and it was time for change, Hudson says.

"We also want to try some new and different things this year so people can see the impact the breakfast is having. We want people to leave more informed, willing to connect with others," she says. "This is the catalyst that starts all the social justice events of the year."

Washington and Hudson as well as all organizers of the breakfast also want to focus on LGBT youth at this year's breakfast.

Hudson says there is too much violence directed to youths in their late teens and early 20s and they need to know there are safe spaces for them to go.

"And if we don't have them, let's create them, where they can be nurtured properly," she says.

A children's space was added to the breakfast a few years ago and has become popular, allowing younger participants to create signs to carry in the MLK March following the breakfast.

Speaking at this year's breakfast will be Rev. Maressa Pendermon of Unity Fellowship Church and Pastor Troy Sanders of Victory for the World Church in Stone Mountain. Both will also be the LGBT speakers at the rally at the King Center that follows the annual MLK March. This year, Southerners on New Ground, an organization working with rural LGBT people on issues ranging from immigration to fair wages, is the fiscal sponsor of the breakfast, bringing two like-minded organizations together in an official capacity, says Hudson.

The breakfast isn't just about speakers, Hudson says. It is and always been about creating community dialogue.

This year, the community goes international with activists visiting from India, Nepal and Pakistan attending as part of the International Visitor Leadership Program of the U.S. Department of State.

For those who are thinking about attending this year's breakfast and need some convincing, Washington says it's a time and place to be around others who are on the front lines and doing the foot work needed to make Atlanta, and the world, a better place to live for all people.

"The people that come are really about seeking and building community, they are about mutual support, they are about doing what they can to change the world in a positive away," he says.

"These people are fully alive and present. This breakfast is really about being with that tribe. Our participants are also a great demonstration of Atlanta's LGBTQ community pulling together," he adds. "It's a great demonstration of Atlanta's beloved community doing what we do."

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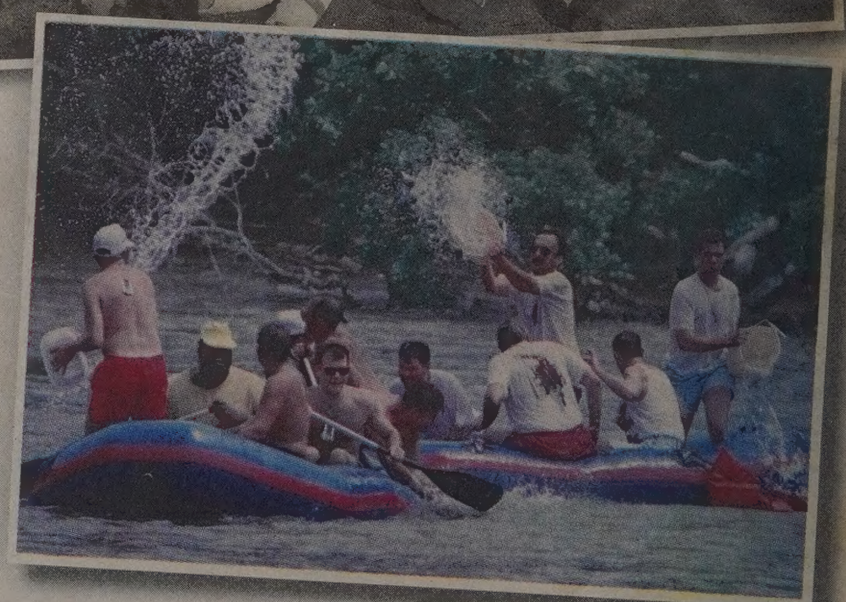
# Georgia LGBTQ Archives Project saves our history

## Social histories of everyday people sought by several organizations

By PATRICK SAUNDERS

on LGBT AGING

(Above) **January 9, 1990:** Police stand in front of the Centers for Disease Control as gay activists from ACT UP stage a 'die-in' to protest the CDC's handling of the AIDS crisis. (AJC photos via Georgia State University)



(Right) **August 13, 1994:** Water fight between rafters on the Chattahoochee River during the 16th annual gay men's Hotlanta River Expo.

You don't have to be Harvey Milk to warrant having your history documented, and the team behind the Georgia LGBTQ Archives Project is on a mission to make you realize it — before it's too late.

The Archives Project is loaded with the foremost experts in archiving gay Georgia history. They include the Auburn Avenue and Ponce de Leon branches of the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library, Atlanta History Center, Emory University's Manuscript, Archives and Rare Books Library (MARBL), Georgia State University's Special Collections & Archives, Kennesaw State University, Touching Up Our Roots, and more.

Their goals are to demystify the archival process, combine resources to fill out each other's collections, and make sure the history they document includes all voices across the LGBTQ spectrum.

The idea for the project sprung in late 2011 with Ann Edmonds, the manager of the LGBT circulating collection at the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library. She started going to Atlanta SAGE meetings (Services & Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Elders) and became aware that some people were downsizing and didn't know what to do with some of their things.

Edmonds arranged a presentation to SAGE about how to archive items from their collections, inviting along representatives from Touching Up Our Roots, the Atlanta History Center, Georgia State and Emory as well.

What started as a one-off presentation turned into a follow-up meeting in December 2011, where they discussed meeting on a regular basis.

"After that it just took off on its own," Edmonds says. "It combusted."

The archivists realized that they had no mechanism to get together and combine resources, play off of each other and support each other.

"We had our first public awareness event at the Rush Center in May 2012," says Hillery Rink, president of the group. "It filled up the whole meeting space."

### 'AN INVISIBLE COMMUNITY'

"We want to demystify the process," Edmonds says. "Most people think about archives and Martin Luther King and Harvey Milk, not realizing that what researchers are looking for now are social histories."

They not only want to give a human face to certain historical events, but document who suffered the effects, who made things happen and why?

"That kind of human input is what's going to be gone if we don't preserve these things," Edmonds says.

With the South being less progressive than other areas of the country, the LGBTQ community here was at a greater risk of being ignored by traditional media, Rink says. "If you look at it, we were sort of an invisible community," he says.

Archiving history proves challenging for the LGBT community in particular. The AIDS epidemic wiped out not only a generation of gay men, but also their historical collections as well. And many families dispose of their LGBT relative's materials either because of ignorance or discrimination, says Edmonds.

"Many LGBTs are unfortunately not connected with their families, so when they die, their collections are just disposed of," says Edmonds. "Even in well-meaning families, it's just not something they're connected with and they don't know. So if you haven't made provisions for it, your part of the picture is gone forever."

(Above) **December 3, 1990:** DeKalb County police arrest a woman, protesting the CDC's handling of women with AIDS.

(Left) **November 10, 1994:** Outwrite Bookstore and Coffeehouse owner **Philip Rafshoon**.

(Above) **October 11, 1989: Moorylien Jenkins** and **David Kelly** on National Coming Out Day at the Atlanta Gay Center

(Left) **September 7, 1986: Michael Hardwick,** defendant in the Georgia sodomy case Bowers v. Hardwick, speaking to the Atlanta Business and Professional Guild.

## 'PEOPLE WILL BE LOOKING FOR IT IN THE FUTURE'

Now that the Georgia LGBTQ Archives Project has been incorporated (thanks to pro bono work from the Stonewall Bar Association), they are applying to be a 501(c)3 organization so they can raise money to advance the cause.

Simultaneously, they're recognizing the need to diversify the collection. In short, most of the collection so far is from upper middle class white males and a modest amount of women.

Members of the project continue to give presentations to local groups, like the March 1 event with the Atlanta Prime Timers. Another public awareness event is planned for later this year that will be similar to the one held at the Rush Center in 2012.

In the meantime, the project wants to hear from seniors and others before their place in Georgia's LGBT history is lost.

"If you're not there, part of the picture is missing, and it will never be able to be filled in," Edmonds says. "People care, and they will care in the future, and they will be looking for it in the future."

# Saving Our Stories

GEORGIA LGBTQ ARCHIVES PROJECT

### What is the Georgia LGBTQ Archives Project?

A group of archivists and librarians who are dedicated to preserving Georgia's LGBTQ history. They have combined resources to point people in the right direction when they have something they want to donate. They will also provide resources on how to view the archive.

### Why is there a need for this project?

Because much of LGBTQ history is lost when people pass away, either because their families are not aware of the historical value of certain items, or they don't care due to intolerance. The AIDS epidemic also wiped out a significant portion of our history.

### Where can I view a sample of the archive?

At the group's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pages/Georgia-LGBTQ-Archives-Project/257162497710554.

Each school or organization also has more information about their archive online along with visiting information if applicable:

- Ponce de Leon Branch of Atlanta-Fulton Public Library: http://www.librarything.org (username poncedeleonlibrary, password 123456)
- Emory University's Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library (MARBL): http://marbl.library.emory.edu
- Kennesaw State University's Museums, Archives & Rare Books: www.web.kennesaw.edu/archives/lgbtiq-project
- Georgia State University: www.research.library.gsu.edu/lgbtqiq

### What is eligible to be donated?

More than you realize. Photo albums, private letters, papers, computer hard drives, protest signs used in parades, t-shirts, flyers, gay media publications and much more.

### I'm not famous, so why would the Georgia LGBTQ Archives Project want my stuff?

"Fame is not required" as the group will tell you. If you're considering something to give, contact them and let them decide whether it's worth being archived.

### Okay, I think I have something I want to donate. What do I do?

Message the group at their Facebook page. Or e-mail group president Hillery Rink at hilleryrink@yahoo.com. Or call him at 404-659-3133.

### The archivists want me to sort through my stuff first before submitting, right?

No! There is no telling what you have and the archivists would much rather sort through it themselves so nothing important gets thrown out before it reaches them. The very things that people think aren't useful are the very things an archivist might be missing.

### What if I can't or don't want to donate my things right now?

Contact the Archives Project and they will help you arrange to have it written into your will so that nothing gets tossed out.

### WISH LIST

Here are some items that a couple of the organizations are looking for. Happy hunting!

**Kennesaw State University**

1. Missing/damaged issues of Southern Voice. View the list of the issues they are looking for here: www.web.kennesaw.edu/archives/lgbtq-publications-collection
2. People involved with early LGBTQ student groups and events on the KSU campus
3. Cobb Citizens Coalition
4. Activists and organizations involved with the "Olympics Out of Cobb" campaign

**Georgia State University**

1. Issues of The Atlanta Gay Center News
2. Issues of RFD (journal of the Radical Fairies)
3. Issues of local lesbian newsletter Amethyst
4. Issues of local Prime Timers newsletter Aptitudes

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# Gay culture's fixation with youth, beauty on upswing

## Ads push pills and surgery, but what about facing reality?

By CLIFF BOSTOCK

About the time I turned 42, my therapist delivered an ultimatum. If I didn't agree to become sexually and romantically abstinent for a year, he wouldn't continue to see me. It seems that the compulsions of my midlife crisis were inhibiting my transformation into a mature, middle-aged gay man — otherwise known among the young as a respectable dead person.

I agonized for a week. *Mental health or lots of random dick? Adapting to middle age or lots more crazed adolescent romance?* I decided to give abstinence a try and I spent most of my spare time that year in the bathtub with scented candles. But I also enrolled in grad school for a new career in psychology. I spent half my time for two years interning on the West Coast. I wrote three weekly columns, did radio work and conducted workshops. I ramped up my already obsessive workouts at the gym. You need biceps to masturbate.

It really was a time of huge positive change. Childhood shapes much of life, but there comes a time, typically between 40 and 55, when the parts of us that have been denied expression come raging out of the closet of lifelong repression. It's an opportunity for true transformation ... or total lunacy. Usually both.

MORE INFO

**'Golden Gays'**
www.slice.ca/video/#golden-gays/video

**'Old Dogs and New Tricks'**
www.olddogsnewtrickstheseries.com/aboutus.html

**Atlanta Jacks**
http://ca.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/atlanta_jacks/info

**Atlanta Prime Timers**
www.atlantaprimetimers.com

**SAGE Atlanta**
www.facebook.com/sageatl

The typical lunacy is the sexual and romantic stuff that my therapist effectively banned. It would have been hard to find my way into a new career while I was moving a new man into my apartment every seven weeks. No, not everyone who hits midlife needs abstinence. Some of us just go way crazier than others. (And, yes, my therapists's ban was temporary.)

Gay men really are special in this respect. We grow up hearing that our bodies, the source of the sexual desire that makes us different, are inherently evil. That's why, in the